

# Geographic Names Standardization Policy for Nigeria

United States Board on Geographic Names – Foreign Names Committee



April 2011

## 1. Introduction

This geographic names standardization policy has been prepared as an aid to those geographic names experts who are the working staff for the United States Board on Geographic Names (USBGN) in the standardization of Nigerian geographic names for United States Government use. The USBGN and its staff work to effect consistent treatment of geographic name spellings in U.S. Government databases, publications, maps, and charts, and are intended to satisfy the statutory requirements levied upon the U.S. Board on Geographic Names in Public Law USC 80-242 to develop principles, policies and procedures for geographic names standardization, and to promulgate decisions with respect to the principles of geographic nomenclature and orthography.

## 2. Languages and Language Policy

### *a. Demographics*

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the eighth most populous country in the world, with an estimated population of over 154 million<sup>1</sup>. Its people belong to over 250 ethnic groups. The most populous and politically influential ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani (29%), Yoruba (21%), Igbo (18%). The Hausa-Fulani predominate in the North, the Yoruba in the Southwest, and the Igbo in the Southeast. Other relatively large groups include the Ijaw (10%), Kanuri (4%), Ibibio (3.5%), and Tiv (2.5%).<sup>2</sup>

The country is a little over 50% Muslim and a little under 50% Christian, these beliefs often being combined with indigenous beliefs.<sup>3</sup> Most Muslims live in the North, while most Christians live in the South. Nigeria was a colony under British rule until it gained independence in 1960.

### *b. Languages*

Over 500 languages are spoken in Nigeria. These languages belong to three primary language families, including the Niger-Congo, Afroasiatic, and Nilo-Saharan families. The top three languages spoken in Nigeria are, Yoruba (18.9 million), Hausa (18.5 million), and Igbo (18 million).<sup>4</sup> (For a table of language codes and populations of the major languages of Nigeria, see Appendix A.) These three languages have their own orthographies, each of which makes use of the Roman alphabet along with diacritics and special characters. However, Nigerian national mapping is produced with English orthography only.

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) identifies English as the official language, and English has historically been the national language of Nigeria for government and education. In addition to English, the constitution does recognize a special status for the most

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<sup>1</sup> (Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division (2009) (.PDF). World Population Prospects, Table A.1. 2008 revision. United Nations. <http://esa.un.org/unpp/>. Retrieved 2009-12-29.)

<sup>2</sup> "Nigeria." West Africa. Lonely Planet. 2006.

<sup>3</sup> "Nigeria." *The CIA World Factbook*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>. 16 Oct 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis, M. Paul, ed. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* 16th edition. SIL International, 2009. Also found at <http://www.ethnologue.com/>.

predominant Nigerian languages (Hausa, Ibo, and Yoruba) for government and administrative usage.

Chapter 5, Part I, Article B,

***B - Procedure for Summoning and Dissolution of National Assembly***

*55The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English, and in Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made therefor.*

In the 1999 Constitution, the Nigerian Government includes section 55, which places Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba on equal grounds with English in legislative bodies. On state and local levels, the Nigerian Government mandates that English is the official language along with “an unspecified number of languages indigenous to the state.”<sup>5</sup> This policy gives jurisdiction to state and local governments to officially recognize linguistic communities of importance.

***c. Geographic Names Standardization***

There are no recent reports from Nigerian geographic names standardization authorities, and the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) reports no known standardization authorities or geographic names experts for Nigeria.<sup>6</sup>

However, several contacts are listed in a 1998 UNGEGN report found through the following link: <http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/GEGN-23-7-address-list.pdf>.

Nigeria sent representatives to the 1998 United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names who shed some light on Nigeria’s toponymic activities at that time.<sup>7</sup> Following is an excerpt from a United Nations document describing Nigeria’s report:

The report of Nigeria (E/CONF.91/CRP.42) stated that a working committee for the standardization of map and place Names had been set up in the early 1970s, and three editions of the National Gazetteer had been published since that time. The official National Committee for the Standardization of Map and Place Names had been established by a decree in 1989. The Committee had been formulating and establishing principles, policies and procedures, as well as toponymic guidelines. Although the downturn in the national economy had adversely affected the activity of the Committee, the requirements of the Geographic Information System (GIS) had necessitated the revitalization of its work. Almost the entire country was covered by maps at a scale of 1:50,000 and those maps were the basis for the third edition of the National Gazetteer. Because of major internal administrative changes, much field work was being undertaken. Once the field work was complete, the fourth edition of the National Gazetteer was expected to appear in 1998. The fourth edition would form the basis for establishing an automated database, and names from a variety of additional sources would be added. The delegate emphasized the importance of continuous training and cited valuable training received in the staff offices of the United States Board on Geographic Names in 1980.

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<sup>5</sup> Ajulo, Sunday Babalola "The Nigerian language policy in constitutional and.." *Journal of Asian & African Studies (Brill)* 30.3/4 (1995): 162. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 19 Oct. 2009.

<sup>6</sup> [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/Authorities\\_listJan09.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/Authorities_listJan09.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/en-report-7thuncsgn.pdf>

There are no known reports after 1998, and the National Gazetteer mentioned above has yet to be acquired.

### 3. Toponymic Policies

#### *a. Orthography*

Geographic names in authoritative Nigerians maps use only English orthography. However, some non-authoritative sources are known to selectively apply Yoruba orthography in geographic names. For further information regarding Yoruba orthography and geographic names, see Appendix C.

#### *b. Generic Terms*

Both English and non-English generics are used in Nigerian geographic names. (See Appendix B for a list of known non-English generics.) Sometimes a geographic name may contain both an English generic and a foreign language generic. In such cases, the English term alone will be considered the generic, while the foreign term will be treated as part of the specific name. Nigerian geographic names may have characteristics and meanings from local languages that are evident to speakers of those languages.

#### *c. Short Forms*

Optional short form names may be collected for rivers by omitting the generic, but only if indicated by the source. For example, the short form of Kwa Ibo River would be Kwa Ibo, if indicated.

### 4. Political Geography Policy

#### *a. Country Name and Capital*

##### *Country Name*

Approved long form: Federal Republic of Nigeria

Approved short form: Nigeria

##### *Capital Name*

Approved name: Abuja

#### *b. First-order Administrative Divisions*

The Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) 10-4 code for Nigeria is NI, and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 3166 code is NG. Nigeria is composed of 36 states and one federal capital territory.

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Generic</i>	<i>Seat</i>	<i>FIPS 10-4</i>	<i>ISO 3166-2</i>
1.	Abia	State	Umuahia	NI45	NG-AB
2.	Adamawa	State	Yola	NI35	NG-AD

3.	Akwa Ibom	State	Uyo	NI21	NG-AK
4.	Anambra	State	Awka	NI25	NG-AN
5.	Bauchi	State	Bauchi	NI46	NG-BA
6.	Bayelsa	State	Yenagoa	NI52	NG-BY
7.	Benue	State	Makurdi	NI26	NG-BE
8.	Borno	State	Maiduguri	NI27	NG-BO
9.	Cross River	State	Calabar	NI22	NG-CR
10.	Delta	State	Asaba	NI36	NG-DE
11.	Ebonyi	State	Abakaliki	NI53	NG-EB
12.	Edo	State	Benin City	NI37	NG-ED
13.	Ekiti	State	Ado-Ekiti	NI54	NG-EK
14.	Enugu	State	Enugu	NI47	NG-EN
15.	Abuja Federal Capital Territory <sup>8</sup>	Federal Capital Territory	Abuja	NI11	NG-FC
16.	Gombe	State	Gombe	NI55	NG-GO
17.	Imo	State	Owerri	NI28	NG-IM
18.	Jigawa	State	Dutse	NI39	NG-JI
19.	Kaduna	State	Kaduna	NI23	NG-KD
20.	Kano	State	Kano	NI29	NG-KN
21.	Katsina	State	Katsina	NI24	NG-KT
22.	Kebbi	State	Birnin Kebbi	NI40	NG-KE
23.	Kogi	State	Lokoja	NI41	NG-KO
24.	Kwara	State	Ilorin	NI30	NG-KW
25.	Lagos	State	Ikeja	NI05	NG-LA
26.	Nassarawa	State	Lafia	NI56	NG-NA
27.	Niger	State	Minna	NI31	NG-NI
28.	Ogun	State	Abeokuta	NI16	NG-OG
29.	Ondo	State	Akure	NI48	NG-ON
30.	Osun	State	Osogbo <sup>9</sup>	NI42	NG-OS

<sup>8</sup> The short form of this name is Federal Capital Territory.

31.	Oyo	State	Ibadan	NI32	NG-OY
32.	Plateau	State	Jos	NI49	NG-PL
33.	Rivers	State	Port Harcourt	NI50	NG-RI
34.	Sokoto	State	Sokoto	NI51	NG-SO
35.	Taraba	State	Jalingo	NI43	NG-TA
36.	Yobe	State	Damaturu	NI44	NG-YO
37.	Zamfara	State	Gusau	NI57	NG-ZA

#### ***d. Unique Geopolitical Situations***

In 2008, the Bakassi Peninsula was formally handed over to Cameroon after a 2002 International Court of Justice ruling in favor of Cameroon.<sup>10</sup> The oil-rich territory had been disputed for over a century.<sup>11</sup> All geographic features associated with the Bakassi Peninsula should have the Cameroon country code.

The seasonal evaporation of Lake Chad exposes dry land to varying degrees. The Lake Chad Commission recommended that the four nations bordering the lake (Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria) ratify a boundary delimitation treaty over the lake region. All these nations have signed the treaty, but thus far only Nigeria and Cameroon have ratified it.<sup>12</sup> The area continues to experience armed clashes among local populations and militias.

## **5. Source Material**

#### ***a. Preferred Sources***

The producer of preferred source material is the Nigeria Federal Survey. Recent editions are preferred over older editions. Sources produced by federal agencies are preferred over other sources. Following is list of products produced by Nigerian federal agencies. :

1. Nigeria Federal Survey. Topographic Maps 1:250,000, 1:100,000 and 1:50,000 (Producer code: 015903)
2. Nigeria Department of Forestry. Vegetation & Land Use Maps 1:250,000 (Producer code: 015970)
3. Nigeria Department of Forestry. Forestry Maps 1:250,000 (Producer code: 015970)
4. Nigeria Geological Survey. Mining Maps (Producer code: 015904)

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<sup>9</sup> A common variant for this name is Oshogbo. See Appendix C for further information regarding variants derived from orthographical differences between Yoruba and English.

<sup>10</sup> *The New York Times*, "Nigeria Turns Over Disputed Land to Cameroon." Will Connors. August 15, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> *ICE Case Studies*, Number 163, November, 2005. Inventory of Conflict and Environment.

<http://www1.american.edu/ted/ice/nigeria-cameroon.htm>

<sup>12</sup> GlobalSecurity.org. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/disputes-n.htm>

Although Nigeria Federal Survey maps are considered authoritative, there are inconsistencies between maps of varying scales. Also, there have been no known updates to Nigeria Federal Survey maps since 1977.

***b. Other Sources***

Nigeria Port Authority Maps 1:10,000 (Producer code: 015911)  
North Central State Nigeria Survey Department 1:2,400 (Producer code: 015915)  
Western State Survey Division 1:2,400 (Producer code: 015920)  
Kano Ministry of Works and Housing 1:2,400 (Producer code: 015948)  
Canadian Aeroservice FN17 1:50,000 (Producer code: 003622)  
Central Intelligence Agency NIS 050B (Producer code: 091798)  
Service Hydrographique Oceanographique de la Marine (France) 1:25,000  
(Producer code: 047016)  
UK Hydrographic Department [Office] 1:37,500 (Producer code: 039526)  
UK Defense Geographic Center G762 1:50,000 (Producer code: 040000)  
US Transportation Command (Producer code: 090724)  
National Geographic Atlas of the World (Producer code: 088002)  
1:50,000 Series G764 (Producer code: 090000)  
City Maps Series G961 (Producer code: 090078)  
Joint Operations Graphic Ground 1:250,000: Series 1501 (Producer code: 090000)  
Joint Operations Graphic Air 1:250,000: Series 1501A (Producer code: 090078)

***c. Gazetteers***

Nigerian National Gazetteer of Geographic Place Names<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Not currently in source holdings. This product has not yet been located and its existence is only mentioned in the following United Nations document: Adebekun, O. 1981. *Nigerian National Progress Report to the Group of Experts on the Standardization of Geographic Names covering the period between the Eighth and Ninth Sessions*. UN Working Paper No. 53, February 17-27, 1981, New York: UN. Available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/9th-GEKN-Docs/working-paper53.pdf>

## Appendix A. Major Languages of Nigeria (1,000,000 or more speakers)

LANGUAGE	ALTERNATE NAMES	ISO 639-3 CODE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS <sup>14</sup>	LANGUAGE FAMILY
Adamawa Fulfulde	Eastern Fulfulde, Fillanci, Fula, Fulani, Fulatanchi	[fub]	7.6M	Niger-Congo
Central Kanuri	Beriberi, Bornu, Kanouri, Kanoury, Yerwa Kanuri	[knc]	3M	Nilo-Saharan
Edo	Addo, Benin, Bini, Oviedo, Ovioba	[bin]	1M	Niger-Congo
English	-	[eng]	1M (as second language)	Indo-European
Hausa	Abakwariga, Habe, Haoussa, Hausawa, Kado, Mgbakpa	[hau]	18.5M	Afro-Asiatic
Igbo	-	[ibo]	18M	Niger-Congo
Yoruba	Yariba, Yooba	[yor]	18.9M	Niger-Congo

<sup>14</sup> Lewis, M. Paul, ed. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* 16th edition. SIL International, 2009. Also found at <http://www.ethnologue.com/>.



## Appendix B. Glossary of Generic Terms

This is a list of non-English generic terms used in Nigerian maps. The notation of (fub) indicates the term is from the Adamawa Fulfulde language. Note that according to BGN policy, the generics of populated places in Nigeria are not stored as generics in the Geographic Names Database.

Generic Term	English Translation	Designation Code
Adamawa Fulfulde	hill	HLL
Chappal (fub)	mountain	MT
Duchi, Duchin, Dutchen, Dutse, Dutsen, Dutsi, Dutsin	hill	HLL
Gulbin	stream	STM
Hosere (fub)	hill	HLL
Kogin	stream	STM
Korama	stream	STM
Kurimi, Kurmi, Kurumi	forest reserve	RESF
Mayel (fub)	stream	STM
Mayo (fub)	stream	STM
Ruwan	stream	STM
Tabkin	lake	LK
Tsauni, Tsaunim, Tsaunin	hill	HLL
Tudu, Tudun, Tundun	hill	HLL

## Appendix C. Treatment of Yoruba Geographic Names

The following paper, prepared by PCGN, is instructive as it pertains to Yoruba geographic names.

### 20<sup>th</sup> BGN/PCGN Conference, Washington DC, October-November 2000

#### **Agenda Item 6.6**

#### **Nigeria:      Treatment of Yoruba geographical names**

- 1      The principal languages encountered in Nigeria are English, Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba\*. The bulk of the country's geographical names are written in terms of English orthography, but the authorities on occasion single out just one indigenous language, Yoruba, and reflect the orthography of this language in the writing of Yoruba geographical names in Nigeria.
- 2      The Yoruba language is found principally in the south-west of Nigeria, roughly south of 0900N and west of 0600E. Its alphabet contains three letters not seen in the standard Roman alphabet. These are “ẹ”, “ọ” and “ș”, frequently written with vertical sub-stalks rather than the sub-dots presented here. The first two letters are modified forms of the standard vowels “e” and “o”, but the third letter is of particular significance since it represents the digraph “sh”, so its use affects the visual appearance and sorting routine of any geographical name affected.
- 3      Nigeria is divided into first-order divisions known as states, and the most notable manifestation of the use of Yoruba occurs in the standard spelling of the state name **Osun**. This is the spelling approved by the Board (FNC 291, 1992), and it was used on a small administrative map drawn by the Nigerian High Commission in London that same year. The BBC Monitoring Service almost always uses this spelling too, despite hearing it over the airwaves as “Oshun”, which is how it is pronounced. It is a Yoruba word, whose proper spelling in that language would be **Oșun**.
- 4      The 1999 Constitution is internally inconsistent in its recognition of Yoruba names. The state name is written as **Osun** (the Constitution does not use diacritics), but the names of the Local Government Areas of the five states in the Yoruba region are written in an apparently random manner, with some Yoruba names containing **sh** and others showing the replacement letter **s**.

- 5 Besides this state name, there are six sizeable settlements affected by this **sh**/s question. In their “English” spellings they are **Ilesha**, **Kishi**, **Ogbomosho**, **Oshogbo**, **Shabomi** and **Shaki**. The GNDB entries are respectively **Ilesa**, **Kishi**, **Ogbomoso**, **Oshogbo**, **Shabomi** and **Saki**. Four of these settlements are also Local Government Areas, and therefore feature in the Constitution. There, three have the **s** variant (**Osogbo**, **Ogbomoso** and **Saki**), yet **Ilesha** is listed in its “English” form. And these six names appear in a 1997 1:1,500,000 map *Nigeria; Roads & Tourism; 36 States* (published by SATOD in Kaduna) as **Ilesha**, **Kisi**, **Ogbomosho**, **Osogbo**, **Shabomi** and **Shaki**, a different selection of spellings yet again.
- 6 The new Millennium edition of *The Times Comprehensive Atlas of the World* has largely (though not entirely) replaced **sh** with **s**. The *Macmillan Road Map of Nigeria* (1982) shows all Yoruba names in their proper orthography, with all three modified letters used, for example **Ogbomoṣṣo**. What Macmillan does is of interest, because they have a long-standing close relationship with Nigeria, including an office in Lagos. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs map of Nigeria (December 1999) uses the **sh** form throughout, even for the state name. France elsewhere distinguishes **Oshun** and its capital **Oshogbo** as *noms français*, with **Osun** and **Osogbo** featuring as *noms locaux (dialecte yoruba)*. France therefore believes **Osun** and **Osogbo** to be the proper endonymic spellings.
- 7 The situation is therefore somewhat chaotic, with no two sources in agreement and apparent internal inconsistencies within the sources. It is therefore difficult to determine any pattern in official Nigerian practice. What is surely certain is that only Nigeria can determine the spellings. It would be very dangerous for BGN and PCGN to attempt to do so. For example, thanks to the Macmillan map spelling of the name **Iṣeyin**, we know this must be a Yoruba name, and that therefore the letter **s** here (without a sub-dot) is a genuine **s**, not an adaptation of **sh**. This map also has the name **Shasha** right in the heart of the Yoruba area; presumably this is therefore not a Yoruba name and it would be incorrect to alter the **sh** elements. The Macmillan map even shows a spelling **Ashewṣeṣe**; the sub-dots tell us the name is Yoruba, but the **sh** here must represent an “**s+h**” combination, because it has not been altered to **ṣ**.
- 8 The questions posed are essentially two in number. Firstly, out of these uncertainties, is it possible to determine whether it is official Nigerian practice to use Yoruba spellings where appropriate? Secondly, if that is the practice, should those spellings properly include their diacritical marks (and which option for these marks; sub-dots or sub-stalks)? It might not be possible to do more than prioritise the available source materials.